

November 15, 2005

Dear Friends;

This week, we present the 2006 General Fund Budget, a plan that fulfills the promises of my administration; exercising fiscal discipline, keeping our families safe, keeping our City's quality of life high by funding essential neighborhood services, and working with our residents to make Columbus the best City in the nation to live, work and raise a family.

We are proposing a balanced budget of \$595.3 million dollars for 2006, with no tax increases, no layoffs of Police Officers, Firefighters, snow warriors, or other City employees. This budget will meet many priorities, including: opening and staffing two new recreation centers, adding two classes of 75 Police Officers, and a class of 35 Firefighters in 2006, investing millions in Social Services and Neighborhood Health Centers. In this budget there are no tax increases, no layoffs of Police Officers, no layoffs of Firefighters, no layoffs of Snow Warriors and no layoffs of any City employees.

For five years we have been working smarter by holding the line on spending and making tough choices. We've made \$195 million in cuts and we are the only large City in the nation to maintain the highest credit rating available – AAA. But we are not out of the woods and we still have our challenges. Health Care Costs are up by 7.4% after averaging 12% the last five years, wages and Health Insurance increases for 2006 represent a large portion of the increased spending. We will continue to work to be more efficient in every way, and we are getting results through Columbus\*Stat and 311, that will help us hold our Departments more accountable, track our work and our costs to better budget for the neighborhood services we deliver.

Building safe, strong neighborhoods is the most important job of a Mayor and we're investing \$415.5 million or 70% of the budget in the Department of Public Safety. We did a lot of good things to prevent crimes in 2005, including making 242 arrests through our anti-gang initiative, and another 292 arrests from our Summer police strike force. These efforts, as well as our bike patrols and Community Crime Patrol, will continue. In addition, I am putting forward the largest order of Police Cruisers in a decade. In 2005, we invested more than \$2.6 million in new walkie-talkies for our patrol officers and Firefighters and, in 2006, we're purchasing 106 new Cruisers for \$3.4 million. In addition, in the 2006 Budget is another \$600,000 for police motorcycles, 10 unmarked cars, a Dodge Cruiser, equipment for 25 Impalas and Fire Vehicles. We all know that safety is more than just Police Officers and Firefighters, and this budget will reflect that as we triple the amount of funds in the Land Bank to demolish blighted properties to \$150,000.

Neighborhood Pride will go to six new neighborhoods in 2006, and continue to serve residents in the 42 Pride Districts toured to date, with coordinated services to improve safety, quality of life and clean up properties. This is very popular, and I'm proud of the

way residents continue to make Pride better. We will continue services in the Department of Public Service, including 118 Snow Warriors and 186 refuse collectors doing weekly trash pick-up at more than 320,000 homes. To address continued service needs in neighborhoods, we are adding 4 new Refuse Drivers and 17 new trucks in 2006.

Recreation Centers and Parks are critical to the quality of life in Columbus neighborhoods. In past years, there were proposals to close some of our 28 Rec Centers and 11 pools, but we stopped that and worked together to keep these centers and pools open. The 2006 General Fund Budget invests \$25.5 million for the Department of Recreation and Parks, a 3.5% funding increase over 2005. In 2006, the new Lazelle and Dodge Recreation Centers will open, serving multiple generations of residents.

For 2006, the City will invest more than \$19.7 million in serving the Health needs of Columbus families, with many key missions and core public health services. The City will also continue to fund the Columbus Neighborhood Health Centers, Inc. at \$5.4 million.

There are also \$8 million invested in services for families in need, especially during a time of economic recession. I believe that poverty is the silent affliction of the powerless and the hopeless in Columbus. We are working with the Franklin County Commissioners, City Councilmember Tavares and local agencies to host a series of Town Hall meetings on poverty. Just as Columbus opened our arms and hearts for Hurricane Relief, we must stand up and focus our energy and passion on the root causes of poverty and how we as a Community help families lift themselves up.

We will also continue to work to improve the Capital Kids program, providing a safe place for kids during the critical after school hours of 3-6PM serving children at 35 sites in 2005, with well over 3500 children since it's inception.

Economic Development is more important than ever as Ohio's economy continues to hibernate. Here in Columbus, we've created or retained more than 15,000 jobs since I took office, and we're continuing to fight for jobs every day. Improvements will continue in the Gowdy Field and Rickenbacker areas as well as the High-Tech Corridor on Kinnear Road, plans for South Parsons Avenue, Northland and many commercial areas will be getting attention. We'll also continue to work on the Far East Side, where we're working with Mt. Carmel to bring new health care jobs, as well as our on-going efforts to develop the King Lincoln district and Whittier Peninsula. For our tax base to grow and pay for critical neighborhood services, we must have our job base grow.

Six years of tight fiscal controls are paying off, with leaner and more efficient operations. We promise to continue to be fiscally prudent with every taxpayer dollar, while delivering the best possible services to our neighborhoods. Thank you for all you do to help us continue to meet our mission of service to the citizens of Columbus.

Sincerely,



Michael B. Coleman  
Mayor